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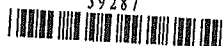
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Contribution of Handicrafts in Employment And Income Generation in Uttarakhand

G. S. MEHTA

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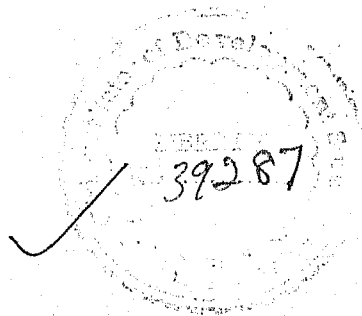
GIRI INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Sector O, Aliganj Housing Scheme

Lucknow-226 020

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A larger segment of population, particularly of those with little or no land to cultivate, is facing the condition of poverty in rural areas, is a direct result of lack of employment generation in rural areas has been a dominating theme of discussion on the recent policy frame of planning strategies. Hence an approach to integrate productive employment creation with growth in rural areas is emphasized while planning for rural development. The need for this approach is felt because; firstly, the phenomenon of growing rural poverty, whose overflow is supposed to aggravate urban poverty, cannot be tackled unless the rural poor are provided with suitable employment opportunities to generate income on a sustained basis; and, secondly, such employment opportunities should be provided, as far as possible, within the rural economy itself as labour absorption capacity of capital involving modern sector is limited.

The agriculture sector is the main source of employment and income of people living in rural areas which, however, is eventually not capable for creation of additional employment opportunities to the extent that rural labourforce is increasing, even after several efforts has been undertaken under the planned development strategies during recent past in regard to increase crop production. The rural traditional household based enterprises offer another source in providing employment opportunities to the rural population. In these activities the rural labourforce is engaged partly or fully.

The rural traditional handicraft activities which are based on locally developed skills and technology of production and are in operation on household basis for past several generations, have an important role in providing gainful employment to rural labourforce with very little level of investment. But during recent past a significant number of handicraft units have lapsed due to various reasons such as significant reduction in the demand and supply conditions of crafts, variations in choice of consumers with the similar types of products manufactured by non-household modern sectors. In such situation the traditional craft producers are unable to withstand competitions with non-household industries despite several types of protection measures and incentives are granted by the government in favour of their proper development. Consequently, apart from low level of labour productivity, some of the most conspicuous constraints in the expansion and healthy growth of handi-

craft activities are inadequate supply of raw materials, finance and inefficient marketing system prevailing in the sale of handicraft products. These problems are well compounded by a number of such factors operating both on the demand and supply side, which impinge on the profitability and growth prospects of the sector.

THE STUDY

In consideration of the importance of handicraft activities in regards for providing productive employment and income opportunities to rural people, the present study was undertaken in district Almora of Uttarakhand region. The Uttarakhand region is among the most underdeveloped regions of India, is situated on the Northern part of Uttar Pradesh. It extends on an area of about 51.25 sq.kms. The population of the region as per 1991 census is 5.87 million. Agriculture is the main occupation of 77 per cent workers and 92 per cent of the population is depending on it for their livelihood in the region. The average size of land holdings are very small (0.99 hectare) and per cultivator net area sown is 0.61 hectare. Average yield rates of foodgrains per hectare land are only 14.60 quintals.

Thus agriculture is mainly providing employment in the region and a major burden of the growing labourforce has fallen on it due to non-availability of employment opportu-

nity outside the farm sector. However, the initiatives undertaken under the various planned development strategies towards the development of agriculture and to increase per hectare productivity have been almost unsuccessful due to certain geographical and other regional problems. The technology used in the farming system is outdated which cannot be replaced by modern scientifically improved technologies due to the problem of the existence of small size of terrace holdings. In fact the modern developed fertilizers, pesticides and chemicals which can boost agricultural productivity, have also certain limitations in their application. These improved inputs can be applied only in irrigated land area while the net irrigated land in Uttarakhand is not even one-fourth of the total cultivated land area.

As a result of such problems imposed by nature in the development of agriculture in Uttarakhand it is rather difficult task to increase per hectare land productivity and provide gainful employment opportunities to the increasing labourforce in the region.

Thus, in Uttarakhand, unprecedently increasing volume of population and larger addition of population in the category of labourforce for last couple of decades has been a serious problem and an issue of discussions among the planners and policy makers. A rapid growth of job seekers has emerged as one of the major and disconcerting social and economic problem. Because the growth of employment opportunities has

lagged behind than the increasing trend of labourforce and the result has been a high and increasing extent of unemployment. As a consequence, a serious problem of the region is well experienced by a high rate of out-migration of male labourforce outside the region in the plain areas for the purpose of seeking employment.

OBJECTIVES AND THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Considering into account the unprecedently increasing problem of employment existing in Uttarakhand the present study attempts to highlight the situation of employment and possibilities to generate additional level of employment opportunities in the handicraft activities in the region.

The handicraft activities in the region are mainly located in district Almora, which are specialised in the manufacture of woollen, ringal and copper products. A sample of 528 handicraft units, consisting of 250 woollen, 211 ringal and remaining 67 copper units was selected for the purpose of detailed study from the areas where these particular activities were mainly concentrated. It was known from the office of the Development Commissioner Handicrafts that there were around 1700 craft persons engaged in different types of crafts in district Almora. So, we have attempted to cover atleast 30 per cent of the different types of existing handicraft units for the detailed study. The

data collection was carried out with the help of structured questionnaire.

STATUS OF THE HANDICRAFT ACTIVITIES

The handicraft activities in the district are functioning in the yards of the homestead of the proprietors with the help of basically family labour. All these three types of handicrafts mentioned previously are mostly traditional industries carried out from past several generations, by households belonging to certain social groups, as a part of the village economy and social structure. The manufacture of woollen products has been carried out by the caste known as Bhotia (Scheduled Tribe) while ringal based products and products are manufactured by Scheduled Caste people. However, during recent past the group of Shyatriya Castes has taken up the woollen handicraft.

The main crafts which are manufactured by woollen units are Pankhi, Shawl, Thulma, Carpet, Sweater and Paschmina. The ringal handicraft units products are Basket, Mat and several other things which are used for carrying out agricultural activities and the collection of forest products. The copper handicraft units are involved in the production of various types of kitchen utensils, metal ornaments and puja items. The machinery, equipments and small tools used in the production of different types of handicraft products were developed past several generations ago by the local craftsmen. The main

machinery required for the production of copper crafts are known as hammers, scissors, fans, holders, cutters, etc. which are manufactured by concerned handicraft households themselves. Machines such as different types of ranch, drum, rahat, bageshwary charkha and new model charkha are used for the production of woollen products. These all machines except new model charkha are manufactured by local carpenters only. The production of ringal products is carried out by different size of knives which are manufactured by the concerned craft households.

The raw materials required for the production of different handicrafts is mainly available in the Uttarakhand itself. However, during recent past the availability of main raw materials required for the production of woollen and copper products has reduced substantially which have adversely affected the production capacity of large number of handicraft units. Ringal is the only raw material used for the production of ringal handicraft products which is available locally in the forests, even some craftsmen have grown it on their waste and fallow land area.

STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYMENT

The handicraft activity with low investment provide lower level of earnings to the workforce engaged on them. Irrespective of this fact these activities have universally

been well considered as an important and integral source for providing employment opportunities to the increasing level of labourforce in the rural areas. The handicraft activities functioning at household level of the craftsmen employ their own family labour. The school going children also equally participate in their traditional household activities while they are away from schools.

While low capital requirement is an attractive feature of handicraft activities, particularly from the view point of a capital scarce economy, they assume importance in a strategy for creating employment and earnings in underdeveloped regions such as Uttarakhand. The analysis of our data depicted that handicraft activities are providing employment to a large extent of both men as well as women labourforce, even a sizeable number of children are also engaged in the activity. Of the total workforce (1271) engaged in the handicrafts the share of men and women workforce accounts for 46 per cent and 44 per cent respectively. Remaining 10 per cent share is found for children. Across different types of handicraft activities the participation of child workers is observed highest in the copper (26 per cent) followed by woollen (10 per cent) handicrafts while it is lowest in the ringal (3 per cent) handicrafts. This indicates that the coming young generation is well favouring to participate and survive their traditional copper handicraft activity than the other handicrafts in Uttarakhand. Accordingly the domination of male workers is found in the ringal (54 per cent) and copper (46

per cent) handicrafts while the proportion of women is significantly at higher level (49 per cent) than their male counterpart (41 per cent) in the woollen handicrafts. This is basically due to the fact that the production of woollen handicrafts require less physical strength as compared to the production of remaining two other handicrafts.

Table 1 Structure of Employment

Type of Units	Workers (Nos.)			
	Male	Female	Children	All *
Woollen	263(40.52)	321(49.46)	65(10.01)	649(100.00)
Ringal	244(54.59)	191(42.73)	12(2.68)	447(100.00)
Copper	81(46.29)	49(28.00)	45(25.71)	175(100.00)
All Units	588(46.26)	561(44.14)	122(9.60)	1271(100.00)

Note : Figures in brackets indicate the percentages of total workers of respective craft.

Further, it is observed that the handicraft activities in fact, have relatively small number of workers per unit. In the sample units as a whole, the average number of workers per unit employed is 2.32; it is highest for woollen (2.60 workers) followed by ringal (2.12 workers) and lowest for copper (1.94 workers) handicrafts. Highest proportion of all units (49 per cent), including 54 per cent copper, 52 per cent ringal and 47 per cent woollen units are seen employing on an average of two workers each and around 16 per cent

units in all consisting highest for ringal (18 per cent) followed by woollen (17 per cent) and lowest from copper (3 per cent) are employing more than 4 workers while the lowest proportion of units are run alone by the entrepreneurs of the concerned handicraft units. The per unit average mandays employment is estimated to be 624 which is highest for woollen (740 days) followed by copper (616 days) and lowest for ringal (481 days) units (Table 2).

Table 2 : Distribution of Units by Size of Employment

Size of Employment	Number of Units			
	Woollen	Ringal	Copper	All Units
1	24(9.60)	31(14.69)	20(29.85)	75(14.20)
2	118(47.20)	107(50.71)	36(53.73)	261(49.43)
3	66(26.40)	35(16.59)	19(28.36)	110(20.83)
4 & above	42(16.80)	38(18.01)	2(2.99)	82(15.53)
All Units	250(100.0)	211(100.0)	67(100.0)	528(100.00)

Note : Figures in brackets indicate the percentages of total respective craft units.

EMPLOYMENT BY SEX

The analysis on sex-wise distribution of workers reveals that the participation of women workers in different handicrafts is very remarkable because these activities are run on

household basis as a traditional activity of the concerned craft households. As we found that only 19 per cent of the units are functioning without employing women workers as against 6 per cent units which are not employing men workers.

Table 3 : Distribution of Units by Size of Employment of Different Sex

Employment by Sex	Number of Units			
	Woollen	Ringal	Copper	All Units
Units with male workers	217(86.80)	211(100.0)	67(100.0)	495(93.75)
Units without male workers	33(13.20)	-	-	33(6.25)
Units with female workers	231(92.40)	150(71.10)	47(70.15)	428(71.06)
Units without female workers	19(7.60)	61(28.90)	20(29.85)	100(18.94)
Units with child workers	34(13.60)	7(3.32)	45(67.16)	86(12.63)
Units without child workers	216(86.40)	204(96.68)	22(32.84)	442(87.37)
All Units	250(100.0)	211(100.0)	67(100.0)	528(100.0)
Average days of Employment:				
Men	281	257	303	273
Women	318	194	230	268
Child	138	141	121	134
All Groups	285	227	235	258

Note : Figures in brackets indicate the percentages of total units of respective crafts.

Approximately 13 per cent units are reported to have been employing child labourers in their respective units. However women workers are seen equally participating with their male counterparts in almost all types of handicrafts, though the proportions of women workers are lagging behind to men workers particularly in the copper and ringal handicrafts. Almost equal proportion of (29 per cent) both ringal and copper units are not employing any women labourforce in their respective units. However, the absorption of women workers in the production of wollen handicraft is seen quite satisfactory as compared to other handicrafts. Only 8 per cent of the units were found not engaging any women labourforce as against 13 per cent of woollen units were also functioning without the involvement any male labourforce in the concerned activity.

MANDAYS EMPLOYMENT

The distribution of workers according to the mandays employment reveals that on an average a worker gets employment in the concerned craft activity for about 258 days in a year. However, the corresponding figures for men is relatively higher (273 days) as compared to women (268 days) because the women workers have to involve themselves in various other household activities. The child workers are noted finding jobs in the handicrafts for nearly 134 days in

a year. The wollen handicraft is seen providing employment to workers for much higher number of days (285) as compared to copper (235 days) and ringal handicrafts (227 days). As far as the mandays employment of women workers is concerned it depicted that the employment opportunities available to women in copper (230 days) and ringal (194 days) handicrafts are relatively at lower extent than their men counterpart. But in woollen handicrafts the women workers are observed getting employment opportunity for higher number of days (318 days) than the male workers (281 days). Accordingly, the days of employment for child workers are registered to be highest in the ringal handicrafts (141 days) followed by woollen handicrafts (138 days) lowest in copper handicrafts (121 days). Per unit mandays employment are also found significantly at higher extent for men workers than the women workers in most of the handicraft activities except in the case of woollen handicrafts the figures of mandays employment for women workers constitute significantly much higher (408 days) as compared to men workers (296 days). It was also indicated that most labourforce find employment opportunities in different handicraft activities for above 200 days in a year. Among male workers, over 74 per cent of them, comprising all workers from copper followed by 84 per cent workers from ringal and 66 per cent from wollen handicrafts have found work for more than 200 days in a year. However, among women workers over 82 per cent, more than men workers, consisting highest from woollen (98 per cent) followed by copper (88 per cent) and ringal (53 per cent) handicrafts are found

getting employment opportunity for over 200 days in a year. But among child workers, a majority of them (62 per cent) have reported that they work on their respective household handicraft activity for 100 to 200 days during the whole year.

PRODUCTIVITY EFFICIENCY OF THE HANDICRAFT ACTIVITIES

It has generally pointed out that the low level of capital investment and backward technology used in the manufacture of handicraft products are the main cause for the low level of productivity and income per unit or per worker. Therefore, most households do not desire to adopt handicraft activity as a source of their employment and income. So that only a small size of households among a particular social group of population have been engaged in these activities for past several generations making them as a traditional household activity. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this analysis to examine the production efficiency and value added of the craft units along with the pattern of per unit value of capital investment and workers employed on different type of handicraft units. A look at these indicators shows that the value of production on the value of per unit of investment is much higher in favour of all handicrafts, it reaches highest to over four-folds for copper followed by over 100 per cent for woollen and 73 per

Table 4 : Some Indicators of Efficiency of Handicrafts

(in Rs.)

Efficiency of the Units	Type of Unit			
	Woollen	Ringal	Copper	All Units
Productivity per worker	4695	1600	10060	4346
Value added per unit of investment	0.58	0.71	1.70	0.71
Value added per worker	2613	1510	3725	2378
Per unit productivity	12189	3390	26277	10460
Per unit value added	6784	3198	9730	5725
Productivity per unit of investment	1.04	0.73	4.60	1.29

cent for ringal handicrafts. Also the productivity of workers is as high as over Rs.10 thousand in copper followed by about Rs.5 thousand in woollen and Rs.1600 in ringal handicraft activity. Per worker value added is again found lowest in the production of ringal handicrafts. Otherwise the corresponding figure is estimated to be Rs.3725 for copper and Rs.2613 for woollen handicraft workers. The per unit productivity level is also not much higher for ringal handicrafts (Rs.3390), though the per unit value added for copper (Rs.9703) and woollen (Rs.6784) handicraft activities is quite satisfactory.

CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of handicraft activities in raising economic status and providing gainful employment opportunities to increasing level of labourforce has to be emphasized. Because most handicraft units are employing sizeable number of both men and women labourforce, even children also. Besides this, with the low level of capital investment a high amount of income is being generated from different type of handicrafts. Over and above per worker value added and productivity level are also quite reasonable for maintaining the livings of households in rural areas.

Further development of these existing handicraft activities in various locations could, therefore, be an instrumental measure for generating additional productive employment opportunities to the increasing level of labourforce provided that due consideration in response to healthy growth and development of handicraft activities should be given under planned development strategies. It was found that the adoption of traditional backward technology used in the production of crafts, scarcity and inadequacy in the availability of required raw materials and the prevailing traditional poor marketing network for the disposal of handicrafts were the most important factors which were adversely affecting the development and growth of various handicraft activities in the sample locations.

The bottleneck in the supply of raw materials can be mitigated through the establishment of Raw Material Banks by the Government in different handicraft producing locations. Accordingly the procurement/marketing centres at micro levels may be established for the purchase of various handicraft products so that the craftsmen can realise reasonable prices for their craft products. The productive efficiency of craft units and the additional level of employment opportunities can be generated by the upgradation of production technique of different handicrafts and making available to these modern machinery to the craftsmen at subsidized rates.

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